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Moldy, leaky old Beech-Nut site needs work for winter

Officials seek to protect building as plans for its future are considered

By Brian Nearing Published 10:03 pm, Thursday, September 29, 2016

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Canajoharie

With the approach of winter, Montgomery County officials are looking at how to best protect the sprawling former Beech-Nut factory in Canajoharie from freezing weather while planning continues on how much of the building might be saved for potential redevelopment.

"The county is evaluating measures that can be taken to prevent additional deterioration of the Beech-Nut buildings that frame Church Street — addressing mold contamination, removing pooled water and sufficiently securing the roof to prevent additional water infiltration are short-term priorities," said **William Roeher**, senior planner with the county **Business Development Center**.

Water is leaking into the unheated four-story building from clogged roof drains, and black mold is growing on many inside walls. Freezing temperatures would worsen existing water damage.

Roeher also said the county expects that remaining warehouses on the east side of the

27-acre property will be cleared to create a 15-acre building site. Assistance to support that demolition will be sought from the state Restore NY grant program and the **National Grid** brownfield restoration program, Roeher said.

The Environmental Protection Agency is still overseeing a survey of the plant, which closed in 2010, to identify pollution risks. But so far, results have not turned up serious concerns, he added. County lawmakers are still considering potential foreclosure on the building for more than a \$500,000 in unpaid local property taxes.

Visible from the state Thruway, the 27-acre plant dates to 1905 and dominates the historic village's small downtown.

Todd Clifford, a would-be developer from Ohio who bought the complex from Beech-Nut, stripped the plant of its valuable scrap metal and machinery before dropping the project, claiming he sold it to an associate. Clifford's crews left behind toxic asbestos debris.

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The remaining demolition is expected to cost millions.

The state provided tens of millions of dollars in assistance to Beech-Nut to move its factory to a new location in the county, but that deal included nothing to ensure that the old plant was either redeveloped or removed.

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